



A typical dorm room at Howard University, Washington, D.C.

Finding Housing

One of the most important things you will have to take care of before you start your studies in the United States is finding a place to live. This is an important decision since it will be one of your biggest expenses and will affect your personal and academic adjustment.

Temporary accommodations

You may arrive at your school before the date when you can move into your permanent housing. The most expensive options are hotels and motels, but some “budget” motel chains can be quite reasonable. Other options include the local YMCA or YWCA, youth hostels and international houses.

Campus housing

Almost all U.S. colleges and universities provide students with the option to live in residence halls or dormitories (also called “dorms”). These are usually for single students, not married couples or families, and are situated on or close to the campus. Dormitory rooms are equipped with basic furniture, and the buildings usually have a cafeteria. In some dorms, there may be a kitchen for those who would rather cook for themselves.

Usually, there is a great demand for residence hall space. As soon as you receive your acceptance letter from your chosen school, return the housing application. An advance deposit may be required. At some colleges and universities, dormitory rooms are so much in demand that a lottery is held to determine who will be granted space.

Off-campus housing

While university-subsidized housing is often less expensive than housing off-campus in large U.S. cities, that is not always the case in smaller cities and towns. Types of accommodation include furnished and unfurnished apartments and houses, privately operated dormitories, cooperative resi-

dence halls and rented rooms in private homes.

To find off-campus housing, ask the university’s Housing Office or consult the classified advertising section of the local newspaper.

Gas, electricity and telephone services, known as “utilities,” are not usually included in the rent and must be paid by you, the tenant, each month. These can add from \$75 to \$200, or more, to the rent each month, depending on how much you use them. Sharing an apartment with a roommate can keep costs down.

Off-campus dormitories

Sometimes there are privately owned dormitory complexes near the campus. These are designated for students and are run like university dormitories. Usually, the costs are comparable to living in an on-campus dormitory.

Cooperative residence halls

A co-op is usually a large house in which a group of students lives together, sharing the

Danielle Stiles, 20, in the dorm room she shared with her roommate in 2001 at Gwynedd-Mercy College in Pennsylvania.

costs and chores. Residents take turns cooking meals, cleaning the house and maintaining the yard and driveway. Because they are generally less expensive, rooms in co-ops may be difficult to find.

Rooming houses

These are dwellings in which rooms are rented usually to individuals, but occasionally to two roommates. Cooking facilities are often provided. It is probably cheapest to live in such a room, but sometimes there are problems with human relations (sharing the bathroom, kitchen and so on). If you consider rooming in a house, be selective and ask many questions.

Living with a U.S. family

Sometimes international student advisers have listings of families in the community who would like to have an international student live in their homes. Sometimes the family expects the student to perform certain services, like baby-sitting or household chores, in exchange for free or reduced rent.

Source: <http://www.educationusa.state.gov/>

